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As capitalism crumbles

Which way forward for anti-war forces?

By Fred Goldstein

With Washington carrying out war, occupation and intervention on expanding fronts, the anti-war movement is more necessary than ever. It is needed by the workers and oppressed people abroad who are the direct targets of the Pentagon and also by the masses of people in the U.S. who will pay for these military operations and have to carry them out.

The anti-war struggle is developing in the midst of the most severe economic crisis in generations. This creates a new situation for the movement and raises two burning questions: what should be the character of the movement and what should be the relationship of the struggle against the war to the struggle against the economic crisis?

While millions of workers are losing their jobs and their homes and undocumented workers are being scapegoated and rounded up in raids, Washington is promoting aggression in one form or another in Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa.

The workers in the U.S. are under attack because U.S. capitalism has been seized by an inevitable crisis of overproduction, which is built into the system.

The oppressed people abroad are under attack because the Pentagon is trying to secure the interests of the giant oil companies and the transnational corporations and banks with global empires, from Halliburton, Exxon and GM to Citigroup, JPMorgan Chase and AIG—the biggest insurance company in the world with operations in over 100 countries. These same capitalist corporations are behind the crisis at home.

These two developments are inseparable: the collapse of profits at home and the search for super-profits abroad.

Just a brief resume of recent events shows the need for an anti-imperialist movement with a global outlook.

Some 17,000 U.S. troops are scheduled to leave for the front in Afghanistan within weeks to continue a war that was launched in October 2001 and shows no sign of ending. The war has recently been expanded to north-west Pakistan, with Predator drones violating Pakistani air space at will and U.S. Special Forces going over the border.

The administration is withdrawing troops from Iraq at a snail's pace and is committed to keeping an occupation force of 50,000 in the country to secure its puppet regime, its military position and the interests of the oil companies, both in Iraq and in the region.

Diplomacy notwithstanding, threats to Iran continue. It was just revealed that U.S. forces shot down an Iranian pilotless plane over Iraqi air space in February, showing both a provocation to Iran and the absolute sovereignty of the U.S. military over the Iraqi puppets.

The U.S. continues the flow of funds and military supplies to Israel to carry out its brutal occupation of Palestine. This includes the continued expulsion of Palestinians to make way for settlements and Israeli ag-

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WW PHOTO: MONICA MOOREHEAD

NEW YORK CITY

Coalition calls May Day rally

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Historic victory for FMLN Salvadorans reject rightist party

By LeiLani Dowell

To mass celebrations and fireworks, Mauricio Funes, candidate of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), declared himself the winner of the presidential elections in El Salvador on March 15.

With approximately 51 percent of the vote, Funes' win marks the first electoral defeat of the ultraright National Republican Alliance (ARENA) in two decades. It was accomplished despite a fierce media campaign against the FMLN—with the assistance of threatening statements by members of the U.S. Congress—and suspicious activities at the polls by ARENA forces.

From 1980 to 1992, the Marxist-led guerrillas of the

FMLN bravely fought against right-wing death squads that terrorized the population of El Salvador. Some 75,000 people were killed over the 12-year period, while many others bear the scars of torture at the hands of the death squads—which Washington funded to the tune of billions of dollars. A U.N.-backed truth commission reported in 1993 that 85 percent of violence complaints they heard were attributable to agents of the El Salvador state, to paramilitary groups allied to them and to death squads. (www.usip.org)

ARENA was formed in the 1980s by death-squad commander Roberto D'Aubuisson, who was responsible for the infamous assassination of well-known liberation

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HAITI 5 years later

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War resisters win support

By Dee Knight

On the sixth anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, support is growing for war resisters in the United States and Canada in the wake of new deportations and repression.

The Canadian government moved to deport Iraq war resister Kimberly Rivera and her family. Rivera was the first woman U.S. soldier to seek refuge in Canada, after deciding she could no longer participate in the U.S. war in Iraq. She went to Canada with her husband and two young children in January 2007. In November 2008, they had a new daughter, Canadian-born Katie.

Meanwhile the U.S. Army charged Spc. Clifford Cornell with desertion. Cornell was deported from Canada last month. He surrendered himself to authorities at Fort Stewart, Ga., on Feb. 17, after being denied refugee status in Canada. He left Fort Stewart four years ago when his artillery unit was ordered to Iraq.

Cornell's attorney, James Branum, told Workers World he waived an Article 32 pretrial hearing on the desertion charges in hopes of negotiating a reduced charge. "Cliff Cornell is a conscientious objector who voluntarily turned himself in," Branum said.

Branum wants the hearing officers to take that into account and not charge Cornell with desertion. He noted that the base commander can be influenced to reduce any sentence the hearing officers might impose. The court-martial is expected in one to two months.

In Canada, the War Resister Support Campaign has called a series of actions to coincide with the sixth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. These include solidarity meetings and rallies in cities across Canada and a phone-in campaign to Prime Minister Harper and Immigration Minister Kenney, demanding they stop the deportations and "let them stay."

A demonstration is planned against former U.S. President Bush when he visits Alberta. A vigil will be held at



Kimberly Rivera and her family—spouse Mario Rivera, children Christian, Rebecca, and newborn Katie.

war resister Matt Lowell's federal court hearing to appeal the negative decision on his application for refugee status. Demonstrations are also scheduled across Canada on April 4 during the NATO summit, calling for an end to the war in Afghanistan. To support the War Resister Support Campaign, go to www.resisters.ca.

In the U.S., Courage to Resist has launched a defense fund for Cliff Cornell and a national week of letter writing to show support for war resisters March 16-23. For more information, see Couragetoresist.org.

Courage To Resist director Jeff Paterson commented: "The U.S. war against the Iraqi people remains illegal today, just as when George Bush and Dick Cheney started it. President [Barack] Obama should bring all our troops home now. And he should grant amnesty to Cliff Cornell and hundreds of GIs who refused to take part in an occupation that has killed untold tens of thousands of men, women and children." □

IFCO challenges harassment

Court targets Cuba

By Betsey Piette

"If the government belongs to the people and we're the government, then why is the government going after my pastor?" This question was put to attorneys for the Special Commissioner for Investigation (SCI) for the NYC Department of Education, which wants the New York State Supreme Court to hold IFCO/Pastors for Peace in contempt of court. It was asked by a member of the Rev. Lucius Walker Jr.'s church.

This question was on the minds of many friends and supporters who filled the courtroom on March 12 and sent messages of support objecting to efforts to punish Walker and his organization for their work in solidarity with Cuba.

On Dec. 23, IFCO received notice of a motion filed with the New York State Supreme Court, requesting a hearing, with the intention of holding IFCO/Pastors for Peace and its director in contempt of court.

The purpose of the hearing was to "punish the Inter-religious Foundation for Community Organization

(IFCO) for contempt of court," threatening them with "a fine or imprisonment or both."

This is SCI's second effort to punish IFCO for their work around Cuba and their refusal to provide names of students and teachers who traveled to Cuba. An IFCO statement noted, "In a broader sense we think they want to punish us as a means of intimidating the whole Cuba solidarity movement."

At the hearing, IFCO was represented by attorney Linda Backiel, who argued that the critical issue is whether a state court judge should order IFCO to turn over to SCI the same information that has been demanded by the U.S. Treasury Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), information that IFCO has refused to provide as a matter of deeply-held principles. If SCI were given this information they would be mandated to turn it over to OFAC.

This hearing comes at the same time people all over the U.S. are asking the Obama administration to do away with restrictions on travel to Cuba. Judge Judith J. Gische did not make an immediate ruling. □



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Their contracts and ours

AIG execs vs. UAW workers

By Martha Grevatt

“Disgusting!” “It’s an outrage!” “They made sure that they got theirs.” These are some of the nicer comments bound to be heard as workers discuss the latest scandal involving corporate misuse of government bailout funds.

AIG—the American International Group, Inc., a private insurance company—was the recipient of \$170 billion from the Treasury and Federal Reserve. Now AIG is paying out \$165 million in bonuses to top executives “that brought the company to the brink of collapse last year.” Condemnation in Washington has been “nearly universal.” (New York Times, March 15)

One would think the federal government, which now owns 80 percent of AIG, would not only condemn this abuse of taxpayer dollars but act immediately to stop it. However, after he “berated” government-appointed AIG chief Edward Liddy, all Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner achieved was a commitment to reduce some of the bonuses.

“AIG had contractual obligations to make the bonus payments,” Liddy explained in a letter to Geithner, “and could face lawsuits if it did not do so.” Liddy went on to emphasize that “quite frankly, AIG’s hands are tied.” (Associated Press, March 15)

Also weighing in on the matter was Lawrence Summers, head of the White House National Economic Council. Summers gained notoriety as president of Harvard University when he stated that

women intrinsically have a low aptitude in math and science. He was forced to resign in 2006 because of this outrage.

Now back in the limelight, Summers, in a March 15 TV interview, twice called AIG’s executive bonuses “outrageous.” Yet he concurred with Liddy: “We are a country of law. There are contracts. The government cannot just abrogate contracts. The easy thing would be to just say ... off with their heads, violate the contracts. But you have to think about the consequences of breaking contracts.” (New York Times)

What about contracts with workers?

“There are contracts”—and then there are other contracts apparently not subject to the normally-sacred Rule of Law.

Summers, who also co-chairs with Geithner the President’s Auto Task Force, knows very well the terms of the \$25-billion Treasury loan to General Motors and Chrysler. The document demands severe changes in the contracts between the two automakers and the United Auto Workers union, putting in jeopardy such hard-fought gains as retiree health insurance and income security for laid-off workers and stipulating that union members cannot strike.

That would be a contractual “abrogation” if ever there was one! Clearly there are two standards: one for millions of dollars in “retention bonuses” that are “promised” to top executives, and another for the wages and benefits actually negotiated by a union and expressed in a legally-binding contract (the collective bargaining agreement). Doesn’t this vio-

late the basic legal premise of equal protection under the law?

Gov’t-ordered concessions whet bosses’ appetites

In February, the UAW reached tentative agreements to modify contracts with Ford, GM and Chrysler. Casting ballots in the first week of March, Ford UAW workers voted to give up thousands of dollars worth of cost-of-living allowance raises, income-security protection, performance bonuses and Christmas bonuses.

Ford also took away one paid holiday per year and ten minutes of break time per day—a de facto speedup. Ford stock—which currently is worth less than two dollars per share—will be used instead of cash to finance the retiree health care trust, as mandated by the Treasury. Forty-one percent of Ford UAW workers voted no on these concessions.

Negotiations are still continuing with Chrysler and GM over the combined funding of the Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Association—to which the companies were originally to make a one-time cash contribution and be free of future obligations for retiree health care—with cash and stock.

At one point the UAW walked out on talks with GM when the company pushed for terms even worse than those called for by the government.

On March 11 members of the Canadian Auto Workers overwhelmingly ratified changes to their contract with GM. Along with sacrificing pay raises and bonuses, they agreed to give up a week’s vaca-

tion. This is the second week of vacation the CAW has conceded since last year’s concessionary contract with the Detroit Three. GM and Chrysler are also pushing the Canadian government for billions of dollars in assistance.

It might have been assumed that Ford and Chrysler would follow the pattern set at GM in Canada. Not so. “Currently Chrysler CAW are not competitive,” declared Chrysler President Tom LaSorda, threatening to shut down operations in Canada completely if he didn’t get a 25-percent reduction in labor costs and a \$2.3 billion loan from Ottawa. “We have to break the pattern.” (Detroit Free Press, March 13) While using milder language, Ford also indicated it would demand deeper concessions.

With LaSorda’s brazen bullying of the CAW there is no longer even the fig leaf of “labor-management cooperation.” At the same time, both the Democrats and Republicans have trashed collective bargaining in the name of “competitiveness” and “viability,” while treating as sacrosanct agreements between Wall Street firms and their executive stooges.

All of this should serve as a wake-up call. The struggle is not between the government on one side and “the industry”—represented by both the union and company executives—on the other. The capitalist class has declared war on the UAW and by extension the entire labor movement.

Now is the time to initiate cross-border solidarity actions. How about labor-labor cooperation for a change? □

Detroit City Council demands fair Cobo Hall plan

By Cheryl LaBash
Detroit

The debate over ceding local control of Detroit’s Cobo Hall to a five-person authority in exchange for funds to renovate and minimally expand the convention center unleashed a torrent of racist media abuse on the City Council after they rejected the proposal on March 1. The political and economic pressure to relinquish control of this prime riverfront property obscures the stark question: Why is this working-class, majority African-American city impoverished when generations of Detroit workers’ labor created so much wealth?

The proposal was crafted at the state level without input from the Detroit City Council, allowing only an up-or-down vote. Any hiring or contracting preferences for city residents or businesses to compensate for the extreme unemployment among Black workers, especially youth, or provisions to cover increased expenses like redlined insurance rates, were specifically prohibited.

According to public Council discussions, the proposal left the city government responsible for police and fire costs, operating shortfalls and the remaining bonds payments while having only one mayoral appointee on the authority board. City Council members documented that more than 50 other cities have requested federal stimulus money to expand or renovate convention facilities.

Michigan governor, Jennifer Granholm,

refuses to back such funding for Detroit and is forcing the regional plan, claiming regulation makes use of stimulus funds impossible.

A March 14 rally supporting the City Council action packed a local church to demand a better deal for Detroit. The next day, at a town hall meeting on the federal stimulus plan hosted by Rep. John Conyers, a representative of the governor, when put in the hot seat, assured that Granholm was dedicated to expanding Cobo Hall and would support any plan if funding was found.

GM profits impact on downtown development

Detroit’s Cobo Hall Convention Center, home of the annual North American Auto Show, anchors the west end of the downtown riverfront. Only a few blocks up the river the mirrored cylindrical towers of General Motors World Headquarters—the Renaissance Center—gleam.

For 101 years, GM workers have made cars in Michigan and now around the world. In 1992, 265,000 GM workers built 4.4 million vehicles. Fifteen years later in 2007, GM production was up to 4.5 million vehicles but with 73 percent fewer workers! In GM’s 2007 annual report, their surplus value, i.e. profits, robbed from the global workforce, was about \$11.9 billion.

GM used its corporate profits to construct factories in 55 countries, including Colombia, Ecuador, South Africa, Egypt, India, Thailand, Russia and Poland, as

well as the U.S., Mexico and Canada, and whipsaws workers against each other to reduce wages and benefits.

When GM shut down three Detroit plants—Fisher Body Fleetwood, Cadillac Motor and Ternsted Cut and Sew—in the late 1980s, the corporation extorted tax breaks to agree to build a new assembly plant in the city. But the new modern Poletown/Hamtramck Assembly needed fewer than half of the more than 8,000 workers displaced.

GM got a sweet deal for their luxurious riverfront landmark headquarters. Tax breaks and adjacent prime property for development, with tax-funded infrastructure improvements, increased the value of the undeveloped land, at least until the capitalist economy nosedived in 2008.

GMAC gets TARP funds

GM also loaned out that surplus value through the General Motors Acceptance

Corporation and Ditech mortgages and car loans. GMAC mortgages joined the unregulated, securitized markets exposed when home lending schemes imploded.

GMAC was recently chartered as a bank, making it eligible for federal Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) funds because GMAC bundles and securitizes loans. This is an especially bitter pill for Detroit residents, whose neighborhoods, now pocked with vacant, stripped, foreclosed homes, were devastated when Chrysler and GM closed neighborhood factories in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Of course GM boasts of its good corporate citizenship and charity, but that is privately distributed. Tax breaks and the overall capitalist theft of surplus slowly starves the Detroit city budget of funds for municipal jobs, services, schools and even some semblance of public oversight far short of worker/community control. □

Petition campaign: Water is a human right

Detroit residents will be able to clearly demand the implementation of a Water Affordability Plan if 10,000 signatures are gathered by May 18. The petition drive to put the proposal on the November election ballot is being organized by the Michigan Welfare Rights Organization. At the petitioning kick off on March 7, 40 organizers geared up to hit the streets.

In 2006 the Detroit City Council passed a Water Affordability Plan, but

it wasn’t implemented by the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department. Thousands of Detroiters, hard hit even before the current economic crisis, are suffering the shut-off of water service threatening health and life. Unpaid high water bills are now added to Detroit property tax bills, increasing foreclosures for unpaid taxes!

Contact MWRO for petitions or more information at 313-964-0618 or www.mwro.org. □



Solidarity with Stella D'oro workers



Workers of Stella D'oro, who have been on strike for seven months, were joined on March 11 by community activists and allies in a protest in front of the company's plant in the Bronx, N.Y. The protest militantly faced off against scabs who crossed the picket line to go into the factory.

The cookie and biscuit company has refused to sit down and negotiate with the 135 mostly women workers, who are members of the Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union. Just days after the March 11 rally, the National



Labor Relations Board ruled in favor of unfair labor practice charges that were filed by the union against the company.

According to an e-mail sent by the Stella D'oro workers support committee, the company is seeking to slash wages by 25 percent; raise premiums on health insurance; eliminate holidays, vacation, sick pay and pensions; and eliminate extra pay for working on Saturdays. Workers are asking supporters to boycott all Stella D'oro products.

—Report and photos by LeiLani Dowell

ON THE

EFCA introduced in Congress

The Employee Free Choice Act, which will make it easier for workers to join unions, was introduced in both houses of Congress on March 10. On the Capitol steps, hundreds of workers from across the country rallied to show their support. This legislation, which allows workers to sign cards if they wish to join unions (the practice is known as card check), is promoted by both national labor organizations, the AFL-CIO and Change to Win. President Barack Obama endorsed the bill in his March 3 address to the AFL-CIO convention. During testimony, workers exposed how bosses take advantage of so-called secret elections to harass and intimidate workers in order to prevent them from exercising their right to collective bargaining. The Washington, D.C., AFL-CIO newsletter Union City reported that on March 9 workers picketed the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. According to the March 6 Wall Street Journal, that big-business organization has launched a \$19 million campaign to stop the bill. No surprise: Wal-Mart is leading the attack.

As capitalism crumbles Which way forward for anti-war forces?

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gression against Gaza.

Under the guise of the so-called “war on terror,” the U.S. has sent 6,000 U.S. troops to lead 2,500 Filipino troops in operations in the Bicol region south of Manila.

In south Korea, 26,000 U.S. troops are leading 50,000 south Korean troops in military exercises—dubbed operations Key Resolve and Foal Eagle—all over south Korea from March 9 to March 20. The nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS John C. Stennis and seven U.S. Aegis missile-carrying destroyers are taking part.

On March 9, the Pentagon sent a naval spy ship equipped with anti-submarine sonar into China's territorial waters in the South China Sea in a calculated provocation.

The Pentagon continues to aid the death squad government in Colombia; Washington is trying to destabilize the revolutionary government of Hugo Chávez in Venezuela; is fomenting a separatist movement against the first Indigenous president in Latin America, Evo Morales of Bolivia; and continues the embargo against socialist Cuba.

In Africa, the Pentagon is moving ahead with plans to establish an African Command. For the present it is headquartered in Stuttgart, Germany, with Army and Navy operations set up in Italy. This bolsters the U.S. effort to strangle the nationalist government of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe through sanctions and undermine the regime in Sudan.

The Pentagon has killed up to 1 million people in Iraq. It has killed untold numbers in Afghanistan, including civilians. The U.S. military has a long record of wars of conquest, starting with the decimation of the Native peoples, then the seizure of much of Mexico and, in 1898, the invasion of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Dozens more followed.

The U.S. is the only government ever to use nuclear weapons. The Pentagon is the overseas arm of the same racist, repressive state that has 2.4 million people in jail, disproportionately Black and Latina/o, and uses the racist death penalty.

More than a century of wars and inter-

ventions does not flow just from bad policies. The policies flow from the needs of the giant imperialist monopolies that have spread their corporate empires across the globe in their insatiable desire for cheap labor, raw materials and profits.

Working-class movement must be goal

Before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the largest anti-war protests in U.S. history were organized. The same goes for Britain, Spain and other European countries. But these mammoth protests failed to stop the war, even though such protests are an indispensable stage in the opposition to imperialist war and a necessary show of solidarity.

Protests can be a deterrent to capitalist governments at times and they are necessary to create the organization and energy needed to move to the stage of outright resistance.

There are many forms of resistance to imperialist war. But the class character of capitalist society dictates the ultimate forms of effective resistance.

A profound and protracted economic crisis, such as the entire capitalist world is going through now, is bound to eventually produce an upsurge of resistance among the working class. Once the rebellion against capitalist exploitation takes hold among the workers, once consciousness of the antagonism between “them and us” becomes widespread, it sets the stage for their rebellion against being used to enable a war for the exploiters—either as workers or soldiers.

The U.S. war on Vietnam took place at the height of imperialist prosperity, when the workers as a class were relatively shielded from the disasters of a protracted capitalist crisis.

The period was nevertheless characterized by rebellions against war and the draft among the youth, resistance among the soldiers, and uprisings against racism, police repression and poverty in the African-American, Latina/o and Native communities. But the workers as a class, at the point of production, remained at a distance from the struggle.

Even during that war, however, the

crucial character of the workers as soldiers emerged. It was the workers in uniform who finally obstructed the war in a material way by rebelling against the military, by refusing to go into battle, by going AWOL en masse and by resorting to violence against their officers. They even organized an anti-war union, the American Servicemen's Union.

Today, matters are quite different. Not only is there a growing crisis for the soldiers who are being called upon to kill or be killed abroad, but the working class as a whole is in a growing crisis. More than 20 million workers are unemployed or underemployed. There are no signs that the layoffs are going to stop. Millions of people have lost their homes or are going to lose them.

The vicious cycle behind a capitalist downturn—where layoffs lead to poverty which leads to more layoffs—is transparent now, unlike in the 1960s. The sight of rich bankers being bailed out while the workers get a few stimulus crumbs is there for all to see. The contradiction of having to close down factories, shut down whole chains of retail stores, keep food off the market, and drive people out of millions of homes while tent cities of the homeless spring up around the country—in short, the contradiction of poverty amidst plenty—can open the way in the long run to organize the working class to struggle against the system and its wars.

Right now \$534 billion has been budgeted for the military, but this does not include many military related expenses such as nuclear weapons research, veterans' costs, interest on debt from past wars, and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Factor these in, and the war budget for this year rises to at least \$1 trillion! The struggle for resources to create jobs is inextricably bound up with the struggle against the military.

But beyond military spending alone, the struggle to bring the working class into the anti-war movement is the only way to go from protest to resistance to actually stopping the wars and interventions. It is the workers who create and transport everything that supports the war. They as a class have the social power to interfere

with the war. In one reminder of this fact, it is worth recalling that the International Longshore and Warehouse Union shut down the entire port system on the West Coast on May Day, 2008, to protest the Iraq war. This was a political strike. While a one-day strike alone could not stop the war, this example is of the greatest significance for the anti-war movement.

The approach the anti-war movement takes to reach the workers not only needs to include working-class demands in its program, like the right to a job, but it needs to seek out ways of showing concrete solidarity in the struggle. In order to insure the broadest solidarity, it is essential to include demands for the rights of undocumented workers as well as demands against racism, national oppression, sexual and gender oppression, and all other forms of oppression.

To be sure, the anti-war struggle must be carried on independently. But it must have a working-class perspective. Anti-imperialist resistance must fuse with international working-class solidarity. It must be recognized that the workers and oppressed of the world are under attack by the same bosses and bankers that carry out exploitation and layoffs at home.

Ultimately, the struggle against the war must become a struggle against capitalism itself, which engenders war and intervention in its search for profit, just as it produces crises and suffering at home.

Strengthening the working-class struggle against capitalism is the surest way to help get U.S. imperialism off the backs of the people of the world. □

Low-Wage Capitalism

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval.

The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world's workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist

PICKET LINE

by Sue Davis

\$1.25 million nurses' settlement

On March 9, Northeast Health, a hospital network based in Troy, N.Y., agreed to settle a \$1.25 million class-action antitrust lawsuit. The nurses asserted that hospitals in the area had conspired to hold down their wages. This is the first settlement of a series of related antitrust suits filed by nurses in Chicago, Detroit, Memphis and San Antonio. "For too long hospitals cut corners when it came to valuing the hard work of nurses," Cathy Glasson, a spokesperson for the Nurse Alliance of the Service Employees union, told the New York Times. (March 10)

Singing for royalties

On Feb. 24, American Federation of Musicians members, including such stars as Dionne Warwick, Sheryl Crow, Patti LaBelle and will.i.am, hit high notes on Capitol Hill in support of the Performance Rights Act. The law will order radio stations to negotiate royalty contracts with artists for airing their work. "It's unfair, unjustified and un-American that artists and musicians are paid absolutely nothing when their recordings are played on AM and FM radio," Jennifer Bendall, executive director of the musicFIRST Coalition, told the March 2 Union City. The bill is strongly opposed by the powerful National Association of Broadcasters.

AT&T Mobility workers negotiate contract

Bargaining covering 125,000 workers at AT&T represented by the Communication Workers union got underway Feb. 24. By March 5 representatives of more than 22,000 workers at AT&T Mobility reached a tentative agreement that boosts wages by 8.8 percent over the four-year contract, includes improved retail store compensation plans, establishes a new career path for customer service reps, and addresses issues of quota relief and monitoring. (CWA Newsletter, March 5)

U.S. unions defend labor in Colombia

The first week in March eight labor and human rights groups, including the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters, called on the Colombian government to respect the work of labor unionists in Colombia and to retract statements that put workers at risk. Noting that Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world for labor unionists, the joint statement reported that 2,697 union members have been killed in Colombia over the past 23 years—one every three days. In addition, there has been a notable increase in forced removals, arbitrary arrests, illegal raids and threats, especially in agriculture, health and education. (blog.aflcio.org) □

- corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.
- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

Workers target Wall Street for April 3-4 action

By Jaimeson Champion
New York

On March 16, 2008, Bear Stearns, the fifth largest investment bank in the U.S. and a decades-old fixture on Wall Street, collapsed under a mountain of souring mortgage-backed securities and other bad debts, marking for many people the start of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression.

In the year since, workers and oppressed people have borne witness to one of the largest upward transfers of wealth in human history, as the U.S. government's response to the crisis has been to give the wealthiest members of society unfettered access to trillions of dollars of tax monies in the U.S. Treasury, in the supposed hope that it will get banks to "start lending again." Meanwhile, the working class continues to suffer through record-breaking numbers of foreclosures and evictions, mass layoffs, and draconian cuts to vital social services.

For millions of workers and oppressed people, there is no time to wait for a stimulus plan to "trickle down" through the economy. For them, survival is hanging in the balance. In cities and towns across the country, the multinational working class is becoming painfully aware of the fact that there is no band-aid solution to this gaping economic wound.

That is why workers and activists from across the country are preparing to converge on Wall Street, the nerve center of finance capital, on April 3 in order to directly confront the billionaire bankers and financiers. Demonstrators will demand an immediate moratorium on all foreclosures and evictions, and money for jobs, health care and education, not bank bailouts and war.

Buses for the April 3-4 protests on Wall Street will be leaving from a number of U.S. cities. Frank Neisser, an organizer from the Boston branch of the Bail Out the People Movement, BOPM, reported that sign-up sheets for transportation to the protest were filling up quickly. "The bankers on Wall Street are getting billions of dollars in bailout money because the workers are not being heard from. They are going to hear us on April 3!" he said.

Sharon Black, a BOPM organizer in Baltimore, said phone lines at the regional organizing center there were abuzz with inquires about the demonstration. "We are getting calls and mail everyday. There are growing numbers of people who want to fight back on issues like foreclosure and layoffs, which are having such a devastating impact on their lives and communities."

Groundswell of outrage

Across the U.S. there is a groundswell of popular outrage over the numerous attacks being perpetrated against workers and the oppressed by the very same banks and corporations that are raking in hundreds of billions of dollars in bailout money.

Larry Holmes, a BOPM organizer in New York, said, "People are angry at the banks that are forcing families from their homes, angry at the bosses that are stripping workers of their livelihoods, and angry at the government that is handing out trillions of dollars to financial institutions.

People are angry and they are looking to take united action.

"The BOPM was founded with the goal of helping to build a progressive movement capable of winning tangible gains for poor and working-class people who are suffering. The BOPM was founded to combat against the phony populism and right-wing demagoguery of the ruling-class politicians and blowhards like Lou Dobbs, who want to obscure the real cause of this crisis and want to divide the working-class movement with racist scapegoating," said Holmes.

Indeed, the announcement that the insurance company AIG, which has received more than \$170 billion in bailout money, has paid out more than \$165 million in bonus payments to executives, has aroused much hostility. Not only are workers angry over this giveaway, it has also drawn a chorus of faux populist invective from a host of pro-capitalist politicians and pundits.

Lawrence Summers, former chief economist at the World Bank and current chief economic advisor to President Obama, feigned indignation, calling the AIG bonuses "outrageous." (ABC News, March 15) Federal Reserve Chairman Bernanke recently stated that the unabashed greed he has seen at AIG over the past year has caused him to slam the telephone down in anger a number of times. (CBS News, March 15)

There is certainly no shortage of greed at financial institutions like AIG. And it is certainly possible that Bernanke slammed a phone or two. But the put-on indignation and phony populism being spouted by the ruling-class politicians and pundits is used in service of their larger goal of obscuring the true cause of this crisis.

By trying to convince workers that the

economic meltdown resulted from the unchecked greed of a few "bad apples" at companies like AIG, they are also advancing the idea that this type of crisis can be avoided in the future with better regulation in the financial markets and a move into some sort of mythic "post-bubble" capitalism.

But the reality is that the kind of economic crisis that workers around the world are currently suffering through is inherent to the capitalist system. There is no such thing as capitalism without crisis. Crisis is written into the very DNA of capitalism. Because of the economic laws of capitalism, whereby each individual capitalist is compelled by competition with other capitalists to continuously expand production irrespective of the workers' ability to pay for the commodities that they produce, crises of overproduction are inevitable. As long as capitalism exists, these destructive crises will persist.

The only way for workers to escape this vicious cycle of glutted markets, job loss, bankruptcy, poverty and misery, which have afflicted poor and working people since the advent of capitalism, is to demolish the capitalist system and replace it with planned production. With the growth of working-class consciousness, internationalism, unity and solidarity, this tall task becomes more achievable by the day.

The March 16, 2008, collapse of Bear Stearns is remembered by many as the beginning of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Workers and activists across the country intend to ensure that April 3, 2009, marks the beginning of a new chapter in the mass struggle that will help put an end to economic injustice and crisis, once and for all. □



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From left: Brazil, Vilma Espin, Cuba FMC Congress



International Women’s Day 2009

Global actions honor women’s resistance

By Kathy Durkin

Celebrations, commemorations and protests were held worldwide on International Women’s Day (IWD) this year from Lima, Peru, to Lahore, Pakistan. The themes varied but all actions demonstrated women declaring their rights and protesting against injustice.

Below is a representation of just some of the global activities on IWD—March 8—this year.

The heroic women of Gaza stood up in the face of a U.S.-backed Israeli military siege that left 192 of their sisters dead and

hundreds injured, with thousands made homeless. Thousands celebrated IWD all over Gaza. They called upon the international community to end the 18-month siege. Their sisters in the Occupied West Bank cities of Ramallah and Hebron also rallied.

Philippine women marched by the thousands in Manila, under the leadership of Gabriela, a women’s organization, to denounce U.S.-Philippine military exercises and the Visiting Forces Agreement, while demanding higher wages and lower food prices.

Migrant women workers, who number in the tens of millions worldwide,

were represented in demonstrations in Hong Kong, Greece, Lebanon and many other countries, demanding decent pay and working conditions, and an end to all forms of abuse.

Pakistani women demonstrated in Islamabad, Karachi and other cities for equal rights and an end to discrimination. In Dhaka, Bangladesh, a prominent banner carried by marchers denounced violence against women and girls.

Women in Warsaw and other Eastern European cities protested the setbacks in their countries since the fall of the socialist governments. They demanded higher pay, full reproductive rights and separation of church and state, in opposition to the collaboration of the Catholic Church and government in denying them choice in reproductive matters.

Women of Via Campesina held a sit-in at the Ministry of Agriculture in Brasília, Brazil, demanding justice. They and their sisters, who carried out occupations and demonstrations in Pernambuco, Pará, São

Paulo, Alagoas and several other states, objected to government support for agribusiness. They demanded rights for pro-worker social movements and an end to repression and violence against them.

In Caracas and other Venezuelan cities, marchers tied together women’s issues and their country’s revolutionary process under the theme, “Men and women weaving socialist conscience for our mother Earth.” President Hugo Chávez announced the newly expanded Ministry of Women and Gender Equality. This bureau will promote women’s committees in tens of thousands of local community councils. Women’s economic and social rights will be expanded under new legislation.

Socialist Cuba ceaselessly puts the goals of International Women’s Day into action under the leadership of the Federation of Cuban Women, whose membership is 4 million. This year 900 delegates commemorated this vital day at the federation’s eighth Congress in Havana. □



WW PHOTO: ALAN POLLOCK

Working women lead the fight

By Kris Hamel
Detroit

International Women’s Day and International Working Women’s Month were celebrated on March 14 at a forum hosted by Workers World Party. Male comrades prepared a delicious dinner, set up the hall and provided music for the meeting.

The program began with the showing of “With Babies and Banners,” an award-winning documentary depicting the role of women in the victorious Flint sit-down strike of 1937. The 1979 film, directed by Lorraine Gray, contains interviews with nine members of the Women’s Emergency Brigade.

The women vividly recount their actions in supporting the sit-downers and taking on General Motors’ goons and cops. Newsreel clips from the period show them smashing the windows of a GM factory to allow tear gas to escape after cops attacked the strikers.

Lee Booth, a WWP member from Ypsilanti, Mich., gave a revolutionary talk on women and class struggle. She talked about working women in the 18th and 19th centuries and dispelled the myth that women only relatively recently started working outside the home.

Booth told about the 1937 sit-down strike at Woolworth’s department store in downtown Detroit, in which women workers won union recognition and better pay and working conditions. From these struggles to the women’s libera-

tion movement of the early 1970s, to the anti-woman welfare reform enacted by President Bill Clinton in the 1990s, Booth showed how “working-class women have always struggled for their very lives.”

Sandra Hines, an organizer with the Moratorium NOW! Coalition to Stop Foreclosures and Evictions, spoke about justice for women and how women have always been in the forefront of struggles to improve the lives of the entire working class. Hines gave many examples of such women, including those in the Laundry Workers Union and Cigar Makers, the Working Women’s Association, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Marie Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Maxine Waters and many others. Her militant talk tied in lessons from the past to women’s current struggles for economic and social justice.

Martha Grevatt from Cleveland was the featured guest speaker on women in the labor struggles of the 1930s and the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations. Grevatt is a Chrysler auto worker and executive board member of UAW Local 122 in Twinsburg, Ohio, and author of the forthcoming book, “In Our Hands Is Placed a Power: The Flint Sit-Down Strike.” Her fiery talk highlighted the role of women in winning unions and improving living conditions for the entire working class.

See Grevatt’s articles from March 2008 at: www.workers.org/2008/us/womens_history_month_0403/ and www.workers.org/2008/us/flint_0327/



‘SISTAH SUMMIT’ IN BOSTON SAYS

‘Bail out women, not the

By Frank Neisser
Boston

A thoroughly multinational crowd of more than 50 women and supporters filled the cafeteria of Roxbury Community College on the afternoon of March 14 for an International Women’s Day “Sistah Summit—Women Rise Up” event organized by the Women’s Fightback Network (WFN). The program was chaired by Miya X, Rachel Hassinger and Dorotea Manuela.

Teresa Gutierrez, coordinator of the May 1 Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights in New York City, which is mobilizing for massive May Day demonstrations, gave the keynote talk. Gutierrez is also a coordinator with the International Migrant Alliance. She spoke movingly of women in Mexico organizing communities to bring food to migrants on trains on their way north and fighting back against conditions of sexual slavery.

She went on to condemn the trillions of dollars being given to the bankers and called on everyone to come out for the April

3 mobilization on Wall Street being organized by the Bail Out the People Movement. Many in attendance expressed enthusiasm and signed up to get on the buses to the Wall Street demonstration. The women also signed on to the WFN’s petition to the governor demanding an economic state of emergency be declared to defend the people from the economic crisis.

Miya X discussed the history of International Women’s Day and described the march in New York City on March 8 to the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, site of the 1911 fire and women’s resistance from which International Women’s Day was born. She also led a tribute to Odetta, Miriam Mikeba and other sister warriors who died in 2008.

Dorotea Manuela saluted working women warriors, including those who carried through the Flint sit-down strike to victory in 1937. Sandra McIntosh of Work for Quality, Fight for Equity spoke of the struggle for access to quality education, which is under attack in Boston. Palestinian activist Layla Hijab Cable gave an inspiring historical overview of



Hong Kong



Left: Philippines. Above: African workers in Athens, Greece.

Socialist origins of International Women's Day

Women in struggle and solidarity

By Kathy Durkin

On International Women's Day this year, we express our solidarity with our heroic sisters in Gaza who have endured the horrific U.S.-backed Israeli siege and who are standing up with courage and resilience. We hail our Palestinian sisters in the occupied West Bank who face the Israeli Defense Forces and hostile settlements daily. We hail our sisters in Iraq, Afghanistan and everywhere who face U.S. war and occupation.

International Working Women's Day was founded in 1910 by European women socialists as a coordinated global day of protest and solidarity among women workers. They were inspired by the 1908 New York City march of immigrant women workers for their economic and political rights, and the three-month garment strike there a year later, by mainly women immigrants, and they felt the ferment by women workers in their own countries.

In solidarity with our immigrant sisters, we embrace our Haitian sisters who face deportation; our Latina sisters who daily face the terror of deportation, jail, separation from their children and abuse; and our Muslim and Arab sisters who face bigotry and so much more.

We thank our sisters at Chicago's Republic Windows and Doors, who heroically took risks by occupying their factory. By their actions, they aided all workers facing layoffs and plant closings, and played a

leading role in the national fightback.

The historic socialist and working-class essence of International Women's Day remains, despite capitalist government and media cover-ups of its real nature. Its history is rife with struggle and solidarity. It has been celebrated by socialist countries and parties, national liberation, anti-imperialist and anti-corporate movements on many continents.

Capitalist crisis impacts women

International Women's Day and global solidarity among women workers has taken on new meaning in this age of capitalist globalization. The gargantuan, worldwide economic crisis is impacting working-class and oppressed women greatly.

Globalized capitalism is not kind to women. Over 100 million women have been forced to leave their homelands to search for employment as international migrant workers. They face terrible working conditions, are frequently denied pay, subjected to physical and sexual abuse, and often lack economic or human rights or legal protection. Women are 90 percent of the world's domestic workers; many are migrant workers. Even children have been drafted into domestic work.

Women perform two-thirds of the world's work, yet earn only one-tenth of its income and own one percent of its property. Women are 75 percent of the 1.3 billion people who subsist on less than one dollar a day. Most of the world's 800 million poor and hungry are women and children, although women produce 60 percent of the world's food supply. Poor children are increasingly at risk for starvation due to exorbitant food prices.

Sexual trafficking of women and children has intensified. The global market garners \$42 billion annually for profiteers who exploit women and children, including those from Eastern Europe, where jobs and social protections were lost and poverty grew after the fall of socialism.

The crisis of violence against women, which is rooted in class society, property ownership and patriarchal relations, is exacerbated by global corporations, which, in their drive for higher profits, super-exploit women's labor while mistreating women and disregarding human rights for all workers.

As the world financial crisis unfolds, a new United Nations study estimates that up to 22 million women worldwide will lose their jobs, with children hard hit. Women workers are likely to have lower-paying, part-time or temporary jobs, with few benefits, little job protection and meager, if any, resources or property.

However, working women, including migrant workers, are fighting for their rights worldwide, aided by women's, human rights' and community groups, trade unions, progressive organizations and

governments, and revolutionary parties.

Imperialism and globalized capitalist private ownership are at the root of women's economic inequality worldwide. This cries out for a socialist solution—with public ownership of industries, where production is for human need, not profit, where society guarantees jobs, health care, education, housing and nutritious food for all, and where all wealth and resources are shared worldwide.

World's women need socialism

Cuba, despite a U.S. blockade, has shown by its living example that socialism can provide the basis for women's equality. Under the Federation of Cuban Women's leadership, women have made great strides.

This historic day's founder was Clara Zetkin, a leader in the German Social-Democratic Party and head of the International Women's Secretariat. Her party, which in 1910 had 82,000 women members, supported women's rights, including universal suffrage and the right to organize politically as women. European women were then pouring into the workforce, where they held low-paid, horrific jobs. They were joining unions and socialist parties at a time when socialist ideas were burgeoning.

Zetkin proposed—to an International Socialist Women's Conference, in August 1910 at the Worker's Assembly Hall in Copenhagen, Denmark—that an International Working Women's Day be set aside annually to recognize the worldwide struggle of women workers and build solidarity. More than 100 women from 17 countries, representing trade unions, women's organizations and clubs and European socialist parties, unanimously voted for Zetkin's proposal. It said in part, "In agreement with the class-conscious political and trade union organizations of the [working class] in each country, the socialist women in all countries shall organize a Women's Day every year." (www.leftwrite.wordpress.com)

Zetkin, a political strategist, likely saw organizing for this special day as a crucial step in building an anti-capitalist movement and hoped that a yearly coordinated multicountry protest on the same day for the same demands would strengthen it and make it more powerful and would also strengthen ties between women in different countries.

Zetkin aimed to foster cooperation between women in unions, women's organizations and socialist parties so they would unite and fight jointly. This collaboration would not only raise class and socialist consciousness, as Zetkin hoped, but it could also win the most political women workers to a socialist perspective and organization and push forward the class struggle.

One year later, Zetkin's strategy took hold. More than one million women poured into the streets in four European countries on March 19—then IWD—to demand jobs and an end to discrimination. Russian revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai said the first "Working Women's Day was one seething, trembling sea of women. ... certainly the first show of militancy [in Europe] by working women." (www.leftwrite.wordpress.com)

In the pre-war years, International Women's Day saw European women protesting the looming World War I. A 1917 strike begun on IWD by Russian women garment workers demanding "bread and peace" led to the czar's ouster, which opened the gates to the workers' revolution. In 1921, the Soviet Union was the first government to legalize women's equality.

Some of Zetkin's issues still resonate today: the struggles against imperialist war and high food prices and for better conditions for women and children.

There are also many different issues and struggles today for women worldwide. The history of colonialism, imperialism and national oppression, with the deliberate underdevelopment of continents, theft of land and resources, superexploitation of the global work force, and the propagation of all forms of oppression and bigotry, greatly broaden the demands from those raised at the 1910 Copenhagen conference.

An international socialist women's conference today would first extend invitations to women from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean—those whose countries have been oppressed by U.S. imperialism, militarism and economic oppression. It would address their issues as well as those of working and oppressed women within the U.S. It would demand an end to racism, anti-immigrant attitudes, sexism, homophobia and all forms of bigotry.

Clara Zetkin was absolutely right about these key points: international solidarity among working women is essential and so is the urgent need for women to organize to get rid of capitalism and fight for socialism.

Adapted from a talk at a WW Forum on March 13.



Palestinian women participate in a rally marking International Women's Day in Ramallah on March 8.

banks!

Palestinian women resisting Zionist occupation, ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Diva Lisa Green gave moving testimony about domestic violence and organizing efforts to fight back against it. Josephina Vazquez of the Boston Women's Fund shared her history as a member of the Young Lords Party and spoke of how those lessons need to be applied today.

Amanda Ali of the young women's group Reflect and Strengthen told how the economic crisis is rolling over youth—with school closings, homes being lost and domestic violence rising—and how youth need to organize locally but also stand in solidarity with struggles for justice everywhere, like in Palestine.

Tasha of New Era, a youth organizing project focusing on the HIV epidemic, spoke of her group's efforts to bring resources and awareness to young people on protecting themselves and staying healthy.

A highlight of the afternoon was a stirring traditional Mexican dance performance by La Piñata, a troupe of 30 young people led by Rosalba Solís. □

Sentenced to three years in prison

Shoe thrower still hero to Iraqi people

By Kris Hamel

Iraqi journalist Muntadar al-Zaidi received a three-year prison sentence on March 12 for hurling his shoes at George W. Bush in a courageous act of contempt that reverberated around the world. Al-Zaidi took aim at the imperialist leader as he stood with U.S.-puppet Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki at a Dec. 14 press conference held in the U.S.-fortified “Green Zone” in Baghdad. Al-Zaidi and his defendant act came to characterize the hatred felt by the Iraqi people toward the U.S. occupation forces.

When al-Zaidi threw his shoes at Bush, he shouted, “This is your farewell kiss, you dog! This is from the widows, the orphans and all those who were killed in Iraq.” Shoes, especially the soles of shoes, symbolize an extreme insult and contempt in Arab culture. Al-Zaidi’s defense attorneys said he told them, “At that moment, I saw nothing but Bush, and I felt the blood of the innocents flowing under his feet while he was smiling that smile.” (Associated Press, March 12)

Al-Zaidi, a correspondent for a small Iraqi-owned television station based in Cairo, Egypt, has been in jail since the December incident. As news and video of al-Zaidi’s heroic action spread around the world, demonstrations for his release erupted in Baghdad, An Nasiriyah, Fallujah and Kirkuk in Iraq and Gaza City in occupied Palestine. Protests occurred in Pakistan, Turkey, Venezuela, Lebanon,

India, Great Britain and elsewhere.

Throughout Iraq, al-Zaidi became a national hero and source of pride for standing up to U.S. imperialism and its bloody war of conquest and occupation. In the town of Tikrit, once a stronghold of Ba’athist forces, artists erected a mammoth statue of one of al-Zaidi’s shoes that cheered the population until the regime took it down.

During the court proceedings, the chief defense lawyer moved that the charges be dismissed, stating al-Zaidi’s act was “an expression of freedom” and not a crime. He told the court, “It was an act of throwing a shoe, not a rocket. It was meant as an insult to the occupation.” Al-Zaidi then entered a plea of not guilty.

“Long live Iraq!” shouted al-Zaidi as an Iraqi judge imposed the sentence. The journalist’s lawyers denounced the verdict and said they would appeal the sentence.

An ABC News/BBC/NHK poll released March 12 found that 62 percent of over 2,000 Iraqis surveyed considered al-Zaidi a hero. After six years of war and occupation that have left over 1 million Iraqis dead, hundreds of thousands wounded, 4 million as refugees and the country virtually destroyed, al-Zaidi has come to represent what almost all Iraqis from different and competing political factions can agree upon: U.S. imperialism’s war and occupation of their country must stop immediately so the Iraqi people can determine their own destiny. □



Shoe monument in Tikrit, Iraq.

In E. Europe, capitalism kills

By David Hoskins

Capitalism can kill you. This is what a recent study by sociologists and professors from Oxford, Cambridge and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine found. The study, published in The Lancet, details the devastating effect capitalist counterrevolution has had on the health of workers in former socialist bloc countries.

The study was performed by bourgeois academics at some of Britain’s most prestigious universities. Despite their pro-capitalist orientation, these researchers discovered that health standards in Russia and Eastern Europe declined in proportion to the degree of capitalist reintroduction.

Mass privatization was recommended by economists such as Jeffrey Sachs as a form of “shock therapy” for the formerly socialist economies. Governments that implemented this model experienced the worst declines in health standards.

In Russia, where capitalism was embraced with a fury after the 1991 defeat of the Soviet Union, the death rate of working adults rose by 18 percent and the average life expectancy fell by five years. The death rate for Russia and Kazakhstan increased by an alarming rate of 42 percent for a period in the early 1990s. The United Nations estimates that in all 10 million people died in the transition away from socialism.

The negative impact of capitalism on the health of workers is well documented. The findings of this study are new because the authors essentially conclude that those countries that retained some of the vestiges of socialism—state industries, a government safety net and strong trade unions—suffered the least.

The Economist magazine, Sachs and others in the capitalist intellectual scene have harshly attacked the study. They have attempted to divert attention away from the class nature of capitalism’s attack on workers in this part of the world by promoting the laughable theory that the decline in health standards is solely attributable to increased alcohol consumption and an unhealthy diet. The attacks are an inevitable part of ruling class propaganda, which denies what many workers have always known—capitalism kills.

The socialist legacy of quality health care

Free quality health care for all has been one of the major achievements of socialist revolutions. The Soviet Union established the early benchmarks for socialized medicine’s achievements following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution.

Soviet health care was a comprehensive system that provided factory clinics, industrial hygiene programs, neighborhood polyclinics and local hospitals at no cost to the patient. The Soviet health care system was recognized for the great strides it made in battling infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis and typhus fever, which had periodically ravaged workers and peasants in czarist Russia.

Medicine in the socialist countries was so effective that it pressured many European capitalist countries to concede some of its features when workers made demands for access to health care. The counterrevolutions that swept across Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1991 reversed the gains workers had made in health care under socialism.

The Cuban revolution lives on as an example of achievements in health care in a society where the goal is socialism. In 1960 revolutionary physician Che Guevara outlined the aims of Cuban health care in his essay “On Revolutionary Medicine.” Since that time Cuba’s system has developed into a shining example of what can be accomplished in providing health care, even in a relatively poor country, with socialist organization.

Article 50 of Cuba’s Constitution establishes free health care as a right of all citizens. World Health Organization statistics demonstrate the superiority of its system. Cuba’s infant mortality rate of five deaths per thousand live births is lower even than in the much wealthier United States, where there are seven deaths per thousand. Cuba has twice as many physicians per capita as the U.S. Life expectancy in Cuba is 16 years higher than the average in its region.

Socialist organization of medical care in Cuba has accomplished all this while spending just \$251 per capita on health care annually. □

Supporters surround Rev. Luis Barrios as he ‘walks’ to jail



WWW.PHOTO:DEIRDRE GRISWOLD

At least 60 supporters crowded around Rev. Luis Barrios as he entered the Metropolitan Correctional Center in New York March 9 to begin serving a two-month sentence for “trespassing” at the notorious School of the Americas last fall. At his sentencing hearing Jan. 26, Rev. Barrios recalled Salvadoran Archbishop Óscar Romero’s assassination in 1980. Romero was killed by SOA graduates in the Salvadoran military, with U.S. government support, after a sermon demanding that the generals stop massacring the Salvadoran people.

Barrios also appealed to U.S. soldiers to stop the repression that the SOA teaches. He denounced the SOA, founded in 1946 and renamed in 2001 as the “Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation,” calling the school a symbol of U.S. despotism over the countries of Latin America.

Also sentenced with Rev. Barrios for “trespassing” onto the school grounds in Georgia were Theresa Cusimano of Denver; Kristin Holm of Chicago; Sister Diane Pinchot of Cleveland; Al Simmons of Richmond, Va.; and Louis Wolf of Washington, D.C.

Supporters included Brenda Stokely, Million Worker March movement; Rev. Lucius Walker, Pastors For Peace; Rebel Díaz, Las Peñitas in the Bronx; youth from Iglesia San Romero de las Américas (founded by Rev. Barrios); and representatives of the Dominican, Cuban and Puerto Rican progressive movements.

Send support mail to P. Luis Barrios #93613-020, MCC-New York, Metropolitan Correctional Center, 150 Park Row, New York, NY 10007

For more information about the movement to close the School of the Americas, visit www.soaw.org. —Dee Knight

Mass resistance propels Pakistan struggle forward

By Deirdre Griswold

Many diverse political forces seem to be applauding the dramatic victory in Pakistan of a movement that has forced the government of President Asif Ali Zardari to reinstate the head of the country's Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry had been summarily removed from his position of authority in 2007 by former President Pervez Musharraf. This action set off demonstrations, led mostly by lawyers. Police attacked the protests, beating many and jailing thousands, some for long periods. A surge of popular anger finally led to the downfall of Musharraf's party in the last election.

However, the new president reneged on many of his campaign promises, including the issue of the Supreme Court. The movement for an independent, democratic judiciary grew.

The turning point in this struggle came Sunday, March 15, when thousands of people were preparing to begin what they called the "long march" from Lahore, capital of Punjab state, to Islamabad, seat of the national government, despite threats of police repression.

On the morning of the march, even as thousands gathered, Nawaz Sharif, a former prime minister and head of the main opposition party who was overthrown by Musharraf in 1999 in a military coup, broke out of house arrest in Lahore as his armored vehicle rammed through barbed-wire barricades and drove to the site of the march. Police, who had been beating demonstrators in that same spot for several days, suddenly pulled back, and word went around that the government had given in to the movement.

Spontaneous celebrations filled the streets in many Pakistani cities and towns. Sharif called off the "long march."

Even the U.S. State Department has tried to claim some credit for Zardari's decision to bow to popular pressure and agree to the justice's reinstatement. It made sure that the news media related

how Richard Holbrooke, the Obama administration's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, and other U.S. officials met with Pakistan's generals, urging them not to intervene as the mass opposition to Zardari held its ground in the streets.

For now, there is no talk of a coup, although Pakistan has been in the grip of U.S.-supported military dictatorships for most of its six decades.

Washington hedges its bets

Justice Chaudhry became known to the world when former President Musharraf—a general who had originally come to power in a military coup—tried to claim the right to run for a second term and be simultaneously head of state and head of the armed forces. Chaudhry had made it clear that, respecting the constitution, he would rule against the president. So Musharraf dismissed Chaudhry and appointed another judge willing to render a decision in his favor.

The removal of Chaudhry had been so autocratic and so obviously meant to consolidate Musharraf's rule that at the time even the Bush administration could not publicly bestow its blessings on the general's move. That would only have inflamed the opposition even more and pushed it in a more openly anti-imperialist direction.

According to the March 17 New York Times, Chaudhry had also taken on "the military establishment over hundreds of missing people who were alleged to have been held without judicial process in secret detention centers, as Pakistan's part in the campaign against terrorism."

Clearly, Washington was not happy with the judge at that time, since it was the U.S. that had forced Pakistan to set up the secret jails. However, the imperialists had to figure that the horse they were riding—at that time, Musharraf—might be overthrown, and so they kept their options open.

The last two years have been tumultuous in Pakistan. When the head of the Pakistan People's Party, Benazir Bhutto, returned from exile to campaign for pres-

ident, she was assassinated at a rally in December 2007 in front of thousands of her supporters.

Her young son was then named future head of the PPP. However, Bhutto's husband, Zardari, took the reins, became the party's nominee and won the presidency—largely based on Bhutto's popularity, not his own.

Zardari's record of persistent charges of large-scale corruption, resistance to the demands of the democratic movement despite his election promises, and his inability or unwillingness to effectively challenge U.S. military incursions near the Afghanistan border has quickly eroded what popularity he had when elected.

The Pentagon has been attacking villages in the semi-autonomous northwestern region of Pakistan, purportedly in pursuit of "radical Islamists" who sympathize with the resistance to the U.S./NATO occupation of Afghanistan. People on both sides of the border share common cultures. Many have died in these U.S. attacks, which are usually carried out by pilotless drones armed with missiles and directed by satellites. As in Afghanistan itself, the "military targets" often turn out to be villagers, including children and women, who are blown apart in these high-tech massacres.

The U.S. had lobbied heavily against a decision by the Pakistan government to increase the autonomy of these regions. This only stiffened the resistance of the Islamic opposition.

New coalition emerging

The main party opposing Zardari and the PPP is the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), headed by Nawaz Sharif. An industrialist and one of the richest people in Pakistan, Sharif had endorsed Chaudhry's cause two years ago but became outspoken after Zardari ejected the PML-N from power in Punjab last month and the Supreme Court barred Sharif and his younger brother from holding elected office. Hence, his dramatic entry as a leader of the "long

march" to reform the judiciary.

What has emerged in recent weeks is an alliance between the largely secular democratic forces and the moderate Islamists in the PML-N. Sharif is undoubtedly hoping his party will replace the PPP in the next election.

Both political parties have long served the interests of the Pakistani ruling class and have compromised with U.S. imperialism. However, what is happening now is much more than mere election maneuvering.

The Pakistani masses are aroused by this struggle over the judiciary. Thousands of lawyers—who are poor and oppressed by Western standards—have literally put their lives on the line. Increasingly, workers and farmers have joined their protests.

The ruling PPP is in disarray, its officials disgruntled and afraid. "There are voices in the lower ranks of the party, an increasing cacophony against [Zardari's] leadership because of the widening gap between the people and the government," a PPP senator told a British newspaper. (Telegraph, March 16)

The U.S. for decades used Pakistan in its cold war against the USSR. Today Pakistan is a nuclear power with a large army and police force—and a high rate of poverty, illiteracy and child mortality. The people are being hit harder than ever by the world capitalist economic crisis, which is adding to the political instability. The elite, however, have profited handsomely during times of both civilian and military rule.

The U.S. government, even as it lays plans to partially pull out of Iraq, is sending more troops to Afghanistan. It is leaning heavily on neighboring Pakistan to allow its armed forces and territory to be used in the effort to crush the Afghan resistance, thus spreading the war and all its horrors to Pakistan.

The current struggle to break the grip of the militarized autocrats over Pakistan's political institutions can become the first stage of a mass-based resistance to imperialism and its political pawns. □

Historic victory for FMLN Salvadorans reject rightist party

Continued from page 1

theologist Archbishop Óscar Romero in 1980.

After an agreement to stop the civil war was reached in 1992, the FMLN became an electoral party. FMLN lawmaker Orestes Ortiz, who participated in celebrations in the capital city of San Salvador, told Reuters, "This victory ... has cost years of fighting, sacrifice and blood." (March 15)

Today, El Salvador has been hit hard by the economic crisis, in large part due to the pro-U.S., neoliberal policies enacted by ARENA during its reign over the country. As living costs have soared, poverty has forced about a quarter of all Salvadorans to emigrate to the U.S., where they work, like so many other immigrants, in order to send remittances back home.

El Salvador, under ARENA rule, was also one of four Latin American countries to send troops to help the U.S. occupy Iraq, and was the last of the four to remove these troops.

In elections held on Jan. 18, the FMLN had won the mayoral races in 82 of El

Salvador's cities, as well as a majority of legislative seats in the country's 262 municipalities and a plurality in the national legislature. (Workers World, Jan. 25)

Dirty campaign to sway vote

The most powerful media outlets in El Salvador waged a serious offensive against the FMLN in the months preceding the presidential election. The Election Observer Mission of the European Union also reported "a disproportionate disequilibrium in the amount of time or space assigned to the parties" in the majority of the news media it monitored. (New American Media, March 15)

The same media spread bogus warnings that the Obama administration would deny remittances from and legal status to Salvadorans in the U.S. if the FMLN won. Washington appeared to back these allegations when on March 11 five Republican members of Congress gave speeches on the floor of the House of Representatives repeating them. Rep. Dan Burton said, "Those monies that are coming from here

to there I am confident will be cut, and I hope the people of El Salvador are aware of that because it will have a tremendous impact on individuals and their economy."

According to the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, "The Republican's statements were on the front pages of the widest circulating daily newspapers on the morning of Thursday, March 12, the day after the presidential and vice-presidential campaigns legally closed, leaving the FMLN unable to respond to the threats." (CISPES e-mail, March 14)

A flood of calls from people in the U.S. on March 12 protesting this propaganda offensive resulted in the State Department issuing a neutrality statement. The U.S. Embassy in El Salvador and Rep. Howard Berman, chairperson of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, then followed with similar neutrality statements.

The government reported that as many as 40,000 Salvadorans living abroad may have traveled back to El Salvador in order

to participate in the elections. (Reuters, March 15)

El Salvador joins tilt to left

With the election of Mauricio Funes and the FMLN, many hope that El Salvador will become another of a growing number of Latin American countries whose administrations are now leaning to the left politically.

President-elect Funes was a journalist who reported on the country's 12-year war, and hosted one of the few programs that was openly critical of the government at the time. During his celebratory speech he said, "Today, the citizenship that believed in hope and defeated fear has triumphed." (Special Broadcasting Service, March 16)

While Funes has said that he will continue relations with the U.S.—including the implementation of trade agreements—he will face a people who are struggling for an end to the corruption and poverty that ARENA's pro-U.S. policies engendered.

E-mail: ldowell@workers.org



Whose side are you on?

It's easy to find editorials in the corporate press knocking the Employee Free Choice Act. This isn't one of them. The EFCA strengthens the right of workers to organize. That's all we need to know. Both the House of Representatives and Senate need to pass the EFCA, and do it now!

Organizing on the job is a right. It is even the law. But the bosses have found ways around the law. EFCA stops corporate bosses that block organizing or intimidate pro-union workers. With EFCA, deep-pocket bosses with herds of high-priced lawyers can't postpone elections. They can't refuse to bargain. They have to sign a contract.

For anyone who isn't sure whose side they're on, look at the lineup against EFCA. Both Bank of America and Citigroup—financial institutions that top the big bailout chart—organized anti-EFCA tele-meetings. Both gorged on the housing boom and then evicted workers from their homes. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is rolling out cash for the media blitz to convince Congress to weaken EFCA or kill it altogether.

Last December, the Bank of America and U.S. Chamber of Commerce both got an up-close lesson on the power of organized workers. When BOA cut credit to the Republic Windows and Doors factory in Chicago, causing it to abruptly close, the women and men of United Electrical workers union Local 1110 protected their labor investment and their right to pay and benefits under the WARN Act. They sat down in the plant and locked themselves inside. They were African-American, Latina and Latino, white but mostly immigrant workers—united.

Labor/community demonstrations including lesbian/gay/bi/trans people protected the plant from any police action. Across the country and around the world support came streaming in. Protests hit BOA branches everywhere. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce representative urged BOA to settle quickly before other workers got the same idea. Both came to the table and met with the workers. And they did settle. The union won. That is why big business is against EFCA and why we're for it. It's also why workers must not just rely on Congress, but organize and fight for the EFCA. □

NEW YORK CITY

Coalition calls May Day 2009 rally

The May 1st Coalition for Worker and Immigrant Rights held a news conference on March 17 at Union Square to announce the upcoming May Day rally in New York City, which has been held there each year since 2005. The historic May 1st marches and rallies in 2006, when millions of overwhelmingly immigrant workers from Latin America carried out a one-day general strike across the U.S., have helped to raise political consciousness that International Workers Day is a significant day of solidarity among all workers of all nationalities, especially in the midst of this catastrophic capitalist economic crisis.

May 1st Coalition members—immigrant groups, unions, laborers, students, human rights activists and all workers—are calling on President Barack Obama to pass immediate immigration reform that includes recog-

nition of human rights for all immigrants; immediately ending the raids and deportations that Immigration, Customs and Enforcement is carrying out, affecting thousands of immigrant working families; and stopping racist profiling.

Speakers at the press conference were Teresa Gutierrez, May 1st Coalition coordinator; day laborers' representatives Marcos Neira, Roberto Meneses, Carlos Canales and Mario Rodriguez; Christina Hilo, National Alliance for Filipino Concerns; Walter Sinche, Ecuadorian Immigrant Rights Group Pachamama; Larry Holmes, Bail Out the People Movement; and Mike Gimbel, a New York Central Labor Council delegate.

—Monica Moorehead

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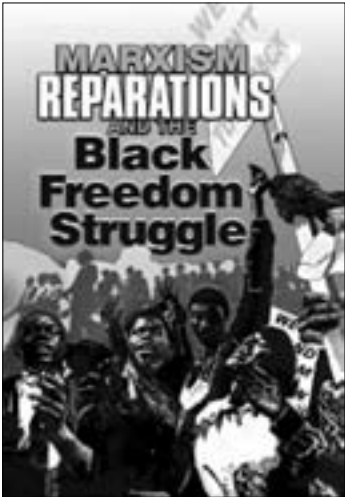


ILLUSTRATION BY SAHU BARON

IN BRIEF

Worldwide workers & peasants



LISBON

PHOTO: AVANTE

200,000 workers march

More than 200,000 Portuguese workers carried out the largest day of struggle in decades as they marched down the main boulevard of Lisbon on March 13 to demand an improvement in their living conditions. Workers from every trade and profession, service, production, transportation and public service, women and men, seniors and youths in this country of 10 million people filled the center of the capital in response to the call from the CGTP-IN union confederation.

In an earlier comment warning about the crisis, Bishop D. Manuel Clemente from Oporto, Portugal's second city, said that real unemployment was at 15-20 percent in his region and that more and more middle-class families were experiencing hunger.

The progressive Portuguese Web site Odiario.info called the protest "a magnificent affirmation of combativeness, class consciousness and collective determination. The significance of this demonstration is clear. It represents an overwhelming response to the attempts of the government and of the big capitalist bosses to point to the international crisis as being the sole element responsible for the brutal aggravation of living and working conditions; and to make the workers pay all the costs and suffer all the consequences of the crisis; also to use the crisis to justify a new escalation of arbitrary measures, including a new wave of layoffs and an attack on workers' rights that make jobs insecure."

Premier José Sócrates and his nominally Socialist Party have carried out rightist social and economic policies since taking office four years ago.

—John Catalinotto

WEST BENGAL

100,000 peasants march

More than 100,000 peasants under the banner of All India Krishak and Khet Mazdoor Sangathan (All India Peasants and Agricultural Laborers Organization) from all over the state of West Bengal in India gathered in the city of Kolkata (Calcutta) and marched to protest the anti-peasant policies of the federal and state governments that seek to uproot the peasants from fertile agricultural lands, and hand these lands over to national and foreign capitalists as Special Economic Zones for setting up industries and for real estate business.

Last year, in spite of state and other repressive acts, a determined and militant peasants' struggle staved off the forcible acquisition of peasants' land in the Nandigram region. Mass actions also stopped the setting up of a small-car factory at Singur.

The hungry and oppressed but determined peasants marched through the streets throwing a challenge to West Bengal government: "Either meet our demands or shoot us down."

The demands included a stop to illegal markets and for supply, at a fair price to the peasants, of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides, as well as essential commodities; withdraw the tax on diesel fuel and supply free electric power to farmers with less than three acres of land; ensure a fair price for the agricultural produce, e.g., rice, potatoes and jute; stop police atrocities on the poor peasants and the tribal people; stop investment of foreign and national monopoly capital in retail trade; introduce free medical care and education for the rural poor; stop the trafficking of women; conserve and protect agricultural lands and protect the rural people from the ravages of drought, flood and river erosion.

The march ended with a huge public meeting where leading intellectuals of the state and political leaders from the Socialist Unity Center of India expressed solidarity with the peasants' struggle.

FRANCE

Workers hold boss overnight

All the unions in France have called for "a day of action" March 19 to confront the loss of jobs in France. Official unemployment increased from 7.2 percent in the first quarter of 2008 to 8.2 percent the last quarter of 2008 (Libération, March 5), and the provisional figures for 2009 are grim. France's economy is predicted to shrink by at least 1 percent in 2009, meaning it is unlikely that hiring will pick up.

The mood of French workers is clear from what they did to the head of Sony France on March 11.

Sony is scaling back its manufacturing operations in France because its global losses across most of its products demand "cost cutting," which is a polite word for layoffs.

When the head of Sony's operations in France and its director of human resources went to their plant near Dax in an isolated area of southwest France to present their layoff plans, the 311 workers in the plant didn't like what they heard.

So they "detained" the head of Sony



Kolkata, West Bengal

fight back

France, the director of human resources and their local bosses in their offices overnight, releasing them only when the government agreed to act as a mediator.

Patrick Hachaguer, the CGT leader at this plant, said Sony offered one month of salary for each year worked, but nothing extra for workers over age 55. “We don’t have much to lose because we’ve already lost our jobs,” he added. “Sony France decided to give us cut-rate compensation when we’re in a much worse situation because of the economic crisis.”

Sony had previously offered more compensation in its layoff packages.

—G. Dunkel

MARTINIQUE

Thousands demonstrate in victory celebration

A general strike in the French-controlled Caribbean island of Martinique has ended with agreements between the February 5 Strike Collective and the local business and government officials.

The strike had coincided with similar actions in Guadeloupe, where a 44-day work stoppage secured a 200-Euros monthly salary increase. It has been reported that the agreements in Martinique are along the same lines as those in Guadeloupe.

Both strikes had been intensely political, with calls for a greater say among the majority African population in the affairs of the French colony, which is nominally an overseas department of the mainland.

State repression brought violence on several occasions in both Guadeloupe and Martinique during the general strikes. In Guadeloupe, trade unionist Jacques Bino was killed on Feb. 16 in a clash involving the French riot police who were dispatched in the hundreds to quell the strike. The workers named the agreement ending the strike the “Jacques Bino Accord.”

In Martinique, workers clashed with riot police as well as business elites, called the “Bekes,” who are largely the French descendants of slave owners from the 18th and 19th centuries. French police reported that four of their personnel were injured in rebellions that erupted in late February.

In a tremendous culmination to the strike, a crowd estimated at 20,000 turned out to celebrate the victory on March 14. The population of the island is approximately 400,000.

—Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire



PHOTO: AIAIF

Five years after invasion

Thousands of Haitians demonstrate to demand Aristide’s return

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

A delegation from the United Nations Security Council ended a fact-finding visit to the Caribbean nation of Haiti on March 14. The delegation’s trip was designed to prevent the development of another political crisis inside the country.

“We cannot allow another political crisis in Haiti,” said Jorge Urbina, Costa Rica’s ambassador to the U.N. “Numerous shortcomings remain in the country, at a security, institution building and economic development level.” (AFP, March 14)

Haiti has a population of 8 million people, with 80 percent living in poverty. The annual average income is less than \$300 U.S. dollars.

The delegation had been in Haiti for four days to hold meetings with business leaders, opposition parties and members of parliament. This visit comes amid growing economic problems in the country, often described as the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

Just one year ago food rebellions took place in response to rising prices and the decline in real wages. The unrest during 2008 led to the collapse of the previous government and the installation of Prime Minister Michele Pierre-Louis.

Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the French U.N. delegate to Haiti, said that “responsibility principally lies with the Haitian authorities” as it relates to resolving the economic crisis inside the country. At the same time, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who also visited the country for two days, called for immediate international assistance to Haiti. (Xinhua, March 11)

Ban met with Haitian President René Préval and told the international press that the purpose of the U.N. visit was to attract attention to the efforts aimed at the recuperation and reconstruction of Haiti. He also paid a visit to the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), which has occupied the country since the withdrawal of United States and French soldiers. These soldiers invaded and overthrew the government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide five years ago.

Coinciding with the visit of the U.N. delegations was the presence of former U.S. President Bill Clinton. Clinton sent troops into Haiti in 1994 to reinstall Aristide, who had been overthrown in 1991 by a U.S.-backed military coup.

These visiting delegations to Haiti set the stage for a donors’ conference scheduled to take place in Washington, D.C., on April 13 and 14. Haitian President Préval thanked the U.N. and Clinton for their visits to the country, stating that they made the country feel that “We are not alone.”

Real role of the U.S. destabilizing Haiti

Despite these claims of concern from the U.S., France and the U.N., it is these entities that were responsible for the removal of the Aristide government on Feb. 29, 2004. Thousands of U.S. troops landed inside the country, kidnapped President Aristide and sent him to the Central African Republic.

Prior to the invasion, the U.S. had financed and endorsed opposition forces which entered the country from the Dominican Republic to carry out attacks on civilians and government installations weeks prior to the intervention. The Group of 184, a largely right-wing coalition of

Thousands demand the return of Aristide, March 12, Port-au-Prince, Haiti.



Western-backed forces, staged demonstrations in order to make it appear as if there were a popular uprising against Aristide.

The U.S. Congress had allocated direct assistance to Haiti, which was held up by the Bush administration prior to the invasion. This intervention took place in the aftermath of the commemoration of the 200th anniversary of the national independence of Haiti in 1804.

The independence of the country was won through an armed struggle that took place from 1791 until 1803. Haiti became the first successful slave revolution in history, which led to the establishment of the first Black Republic during the period of slavery and colonialism.

Successive U.S. governments refused to recognize Haiti between 1804 and 1862. It was only during the Civil War that the Black Republic was recognized. The U.S. has intervened on numerous occasions in the country, including the 1915-34 occupation that was resisted vigorously by the Haitian masses.

In 2004, it was only the worldwide outrage at the kidnapping of Aristide and the intervention of the International Action Center along with Congressperson Maxine Waters that brought about the release of the Haitian president. Aristide then traveled to the allied country of the Republic of South Africa under former President Thabo Mbeki. Aristide was granted political asylum in South Africa, where he remains today.

Nonetheless, the Haitian people have not forgotten the events of 2004. On the fifth anniversary of the invasion, more than 10,000 people demonstrated in Port-au-Prince demanding the return of President Aristide.

Less than two weeks later, during the U.N.’s and Clinton’s visit to the country, another mass demonstration took place. Haiti Action, a solidarity organization based in the California Bay Area, stated, “Over 10,000 pro-democracy activists took to the streets of Haiti’s capital, once again, to demand the return of President Aristide, who was kidnapped by U.S. officials five years ago.” (Haitiaction.net, March 12)

The group went on to say, “While the U.S. State Department assisted its escorts—an assortment of NGO personalities—in avoiding any contact with the largest political party in Haiti, Fanmi Lavalas simply converged on the National Palace from the surrounding neighborhoods.”

The demonstration also protested the exclusion by the Conseil Electoral Provisoire (CEP) of Fanmi Lavalas candidates from the senatorial elections scheduled to take place in April. On March 14, members of Fanmi Lavalas met with the U.N. delegation, which ostensibly encouraged the party to legally challenge the exclusion.

A March 15 Associated Press article stated: “The trouble with the Lavalas slate owes to divisions between two rival factions that split over the party’s direction after Aristide was ousted by a rebellion in 2004. Each faction submitted its own,

separate list of candidates. Both were rejected because of a failure to produce documents signed by Aristide, who lives in South Africa.”

Dr. Maryse Narcisse, a Lavalas executive council member, indicated that legal appeals to the CEP decision would continue during campaigning for the senate race, which starts on March 16. The elections for 12 of the 30 senatorial seats were originally scheduled for late 2007. However, the elections were postponed as a result of natural disasters and political unrest.

Also on March 14, demonstrators clashed with police in the central plateau town of Cornillon. The unrest was in response to the seating of an elections council that is seeking another delay in the senate poll. (Radio Kiskeya, March 15)

Haiti must not be forgotten

Anti-imperialist groups in the U.S. must continue to raise the plight of the Haitian masses at demonstrations and other forums opposing war and occupation. Just recently, the IAC launched a petition campaign demanding that the 30,000 Haitians now threatened with deportation be allowed to remain in the U.S.

At the same time, U.S. Congressperson Barbara Lee and 10 other members of the House of Representatives have introduced a bill requesting an investigation into the Bush administration’s role in the 2004 destabilization campaign and invasion. The original proposed legislation, called the Truth Act, has been submitted annually to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs by Congressperson Lee.

Lee stated in 2004: “We do not teach people to overthrow our U.S. government, and the Bush administration must not participate in the overthrow of other democratically-elected governments. The United States must stand firm in its support of democracy and not allow a nascent democracy like Haiti to fall victim to the Bush administration’s apparent policy of regime change.” (Haiti Action News, Feb. 5)

At a March 2004 Western Hemisphere hearing in Washington, Lee said to the then Assistant Secretary of State Roger Noriega and the Bush administration that they were responsible for the political situation prevailing in Haiti. She accused the administration of “aiding and abetting” the removal of Aristide.

“Regime change takes a variety of forms, and this looks like a blatant form of regime change to me,” Congressperson Lee told Noriega. The bill, now known as H.R. 331, could make the congressional calendar for review in 2009. (Haiti Action News, Feb. 5)

The bill’s current co-sponsors include Corrine Brown (Fla.), Chaka Fattah (Pa.), Michael Honda (Calif.), Bernice Eddie Johnson (Texas), Dennis J. Kucinich (Ohio), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D.C.), Donald M. Payne (N.J.), Charles B. Rangel (N.Y.), Janice Schakowsky (Ill.) and Maxine Waters (Calif.). □



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo,
Ramón Labañino Salazar,
Rene González Sehwerert,
Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez
y Fernando González Llort.

Escritos jurídicos apoyan a Mumia y a los Cinco Cubanos



Por Cheryl LaBash

La Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos tuvo un indicio del fuerte apoyo existente para Mumia Abu Jamal y los Cinco Cubanos: Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, René González y Ramón Labañino, cuando el 5 y el 6 de marzo fueron sometidos documentos jurídicos tipo “amigo de la corte” a favor de estos seis reconocidos prisioneros políticos.

La Corte Suprema de los Estados Unidos escucha los argumentos de unos cien casos al año a pesar de que miles son sometidos. Los escritos sometidos afirman la necesidad de un examen completo de todos los asuntos legales en ambos casos.

El racismo en la selección del jurado y el derecho de los acusados a un juicio justo son el foco de ambas apelaciones. Abu-Jamal y los Cinco Cubanos fueron procesados, condenados y encarcelados por razones políticas.

Abu-Jamal, quien ha estado en prisión por más de veintisiete años, es un connotado periodista africano americano que se atrevió a “darle voz a los sin voz” defendiendo la organización MOVE y la comunidad africana americana en Filadelfia contra la policía racista. El estado de Pensilvania continúa forzando la ejecución de Abu-Jamal a pesar de evidencias de coerción policial de testigos e incluso la confesión jurada de otra persona.

El cinco de marzo, el Fondo de Defensa y Educación Legal (LDF por sus siglas en

inglés) del NAACP sometió un documento jurídico tipo “amigo de la corte” apoyando “la queja por discriminación racial en la selección del jurado en el juicio del 1981 para la pena de muerte” de Abu-Jamal. El primer juez africano americano de la Corte Suprema Thurgood Marshall, fue también el primer director abogado del Fondo de Defensa Legal fundado en el 1940 para “ayudar a que l@s african@s american@s aseguraran sus derechos a través de demandas por procesos legales.” (naacpldf.org)

El blog de LDF, thedefendersonline.org establece evidencia clara del racismo en la oficina del fiscal en Filadelfia hacia el caso de Abu-Jamal incluyendo un video de Jack McMahon quien entonces era asistente del fiscal de distrito de Filadelfia, ofreciendo estrategias de cómo excluir jurados de color. El expediente de LDF y toda la información adicional de la lucha para liberar Abu-Jamal se encuentra en www.millions4mumia.org.

En el 6 de marzo, 12 diferentes documentos de amigos de la corte fueron sometidos urgiendo a la Corte Suprema escuchar el caso de los Cinco Cubanos. De acuerdo con el comunicado de prensa expedido por el abogado Thomas Goldstein, este es “el numero más grande de escritos de amigos de la corte que ha sucedido urgiendo a la Corte Suprema revisar una condena criminal.” Los documentos representan a diez ganadores del Premio Nobel de Derechos Humanos; cientos de parlamentari@s internacionales; el

Senado Mexicano; Mary Robinson, ex-Alta Comisionada para los Derechos Humanos de las Naciones Unidas y ex-Presidenta de Irlanda; el Proyecto de Jurado Nacional; la Asociación Nacional de Abogados; la Asociación Nacional de Abogados Negros; la Asociación de Abogados de Defensa Criminal de Florida- Capitulo de Miami; academic@s.cuban-american@s; y otras personalidades. Un resumen detallado y el enlace al texto completo se encuentran en www.thecuban5.org.

Los escritos jurídicos dejan ver el fuerte apoyo internacional para los Cinco Cubanos quienes vinieron a los Estados Unidos para vigilar las organizaciones paramilitares establecidas en Florida que planeaban ataques violentos contra Cuba durante los años de 1990. Muchos comités locales y nacionales, incluyendo el Comité Nacional para Liberar a Los Cinco Cubanos, incansablemente organizaron para dar a conocer este caso en un determinado esfuerzo por romper el muro de silencio de los medio de comunicación en los Estados Unidos.

Una carta fechada el 3 de marzo del Sindicato Canadiense de Trabajadores del Servicio de Correos enviada al Presidente Barack Obama dijo: “La historia reciente ha mostrado que en los Estados Unidos han sido planeados y lanzados ataques terroristas en contra del pueblo cubano por muchos años. No hubo ningún intento serio de parte de las autoridades de los EEUU para prevenir esto y existen muchas evidencias de que las agencias de seguridad de ustedes ayudaron y fomentaron

estos crímenes. El crimen de estos Cinco hombres Cubanos fue el de investigar y reportar ataques terroristas planeados contra el pueblo cubano. En ningún momento intentaron estos individuos buscar secretos militares. Su única meta era la de proteger a su pueblo de más muertes originadas desde el sur de la Florida.

“Estos hombres han sido castigados aún más. Mientras que no hay evidencias de que no son menos que presos modelos, han sido aislados en confinamiento solitario por largos periodos. A dos de los cinco le han sido negados la visita de su esposa. No le vemos ningún valor a este castigo cruel, ningún beneficio para la seguridad de los EEUU y sí graves daños a la credibilidad de ustedes como nación fundada sobre el proceso de ley”.

Aunque estos casos serán considerados por la Corte Suprema de Justicia de los EEUU, es la lucha en las calles donde al final serán ganadas las decisiones. Como escribió Robert Bryan, el abogado de Abu-Jamal, “esta es una lucha de vida o muerte para rescatar a Mumia. Él está en el peligro más grande desde su arresto. Su apoyo y su activismo se necesitan. El hecho de que Mumia permanezca encarcelado y condenado a muerte es una afrenta a los derechos humanos más básicos. Tenemos que seguir agresivamente con esta lucha hasta que esté libre”. (Para más información vea a www.millions4mumia.org.)

¡Libertad para Mumia! ¡Libertad para los Cinco Cubanos! □

Reforma del sistema de salud — ¿cómo pueden obtenerla l@s trabajadores/as?

Por David Hoskins

La crisis en el cuidado de salud que enfrentan l@s trabajadores/as de los EEUU es severa. Cincuenta millones de personas carecen de seguro de la salud y otras 25 millones tienen cobertura inadecuada.

El gobierno federal estima que el país gastará \$2,5 billones en cuidado de salud este año. Esta cifra representa un promedio de \$8160 por persona para un sistema que no proporciona cuidado adecuado a una de cada cuatro personas. La derecha está rechazando hasta reformas incrementales con su oposición a los controles de precios de fármacos y a planes públicos que compiten con aseguradoras privadas.

Dos de los sindicatos más grandes de este país, la Federación Americana de Empleados del Estado, Condado y Municipales (AFSCME) y el Sindicato Internacional de Empleados de Servicio (SEIU), recientemente anunciaron su salida de una coalición nacional para la reforma del sistema de salud. La coalición, conocida como el Diálogo para la Reforma del Cuidado de Salud, tiene una composición ecléctica incluyendo a compañías farmacéuticas y aseguradoras, la Cámara de Comercio de los EEUU, organizaciones sindicales y grupos defensores de pacientes, consumidores y profesionales del cuidado de la salud.

El grupo tenía la tarea de buscar intereses comunes para cambios importantes en el sistema de salud. La coalición está encabezada por el presidente de la

Asociación Americana de Hospitales, un grupo corporativo anti sindical que representa a hospitales y proveedores privados. AFSCME y SEIU se retiraron al no ganar apoyo para unas propuestas modestas, como por ejemplo el exigir que la empresa contribuyera al costo de la cobertura para l@s trabajadores/as.

La salida de los sindicatos de esta coalición muestra que el colaborar con las grandes corporaciones farmacéuticas y de seguros que son las responsables por la presente crisis del cuidado de salud, es un callejón sin salida. L@s representantes de la industria están opuestos instintivamente hasta a las reformas más moderadas porque su búsqueda de ganancias corporativas exige racionar el cuidado basado en la capacidad de pagar del/la paciente. Los sindicatos deben prepararse para una lucha seria si los intereses de l@s trabajadores/as van a ser representados en esta lucha por la reforma del cuidado de salud.

El presidente Barack Obama anunció que ha escogido a la gobernadora de Kansas Kathleen Sebelius, como secretaria de Servicios Humanos y de Salud. El anuncio de Obama ha salido mientras su administración empieza a formular su plan para la reforma de salud. La selección de Sebelius ha sido loada ampliamente por los medios corporativos de comunicación, al mismo tiempo en que much@s activistas han comenzado a dudar del compromiso de ella al cuidado de salud universal. Su nombramiento fue recibido con agrado por la industria de seguros y

por los republicanos que la ven como una demócrata moderada y pro-corporaciones capaz de entorpecer la demanda por una reforma genuina.

Lo que contiene el plan de salud

El plan de cuidado de salud propuesto por la administración es un esfuerzo para expandir los seguros de salud extendiendo programas del gobierno mientras se limitan los gastos. Representa un intento de ampliación que posterga el seguro universal a un tiempo incierto en el futuro.

El plan prohíbe que las aseguradoras privadas le nieguen a alguien la cobertura sin importar su historial médico y provee subvenciones para ayudar a comprar seguros de salud para l@s trabajadores/as con bajos ingresos. La propuesta también permitiría comprar un programa nuevo de seguro público en vez de comprar seguro privado.

Sin embargo, l@s trabajadores/as necesitan un plan que provea cuidado de calidad a toda persona que lo necesite, no importa su capacidad de pagar — especialmente ahora cuando más y más lugares de empleo están desapareciendo.

La organización Médicos por un Plan Nacional de Salud estima que de las 50 millones de personas en los Estados Unidos sin seguro de salud, por lo menos 15 millones se quedarán sin seguro si el Congreso pasa esta versión de la reforma de salud. El defecto fundamental de este plan es que trata de resolver la crisis de salud vendiendo seguros.

Hay ya un proyecto de ley en el Congreso para establecer un sistema de seguros de salud conocido como “pagador único”. La legislación se conoce popularmente como “Medicare para tod@s” (H.R.676). La aprobación de esta legislación progresista no es la solución total para el sistema capitalista de cuidado de salud que está basado en la industria médica sacando ganancias de las enfermedades, pero sí representaría una victoria importante para l@s trabajadores/as.

Cualquier persona que viva o esté de visita en los Estados Unidos sería elegible para cubierta bajo la H.R. 676. El programa propuesto cubre el cuidado primario, el de emergencia, medicamentos, servicios de salud mental y de cuidado a largo plazo. Los cuidados dentales y de visión, cuidado interno en el hospital y ambulante y equipo médico necesario también están cubiertos. El/la paciente no paga ningún “co-pago” ni deducible, y las aseguradoras privadas quedan prohibidas de vender seguros que dupliquen los beneficios cubiertos por la ley.

La marcha nacional del 3 y 4 de abril en Wall Street ofrece una oportunidad para que los sindicatos empiecen a involucrar a l@s trabajadores/as para construir un programa amplio de lucha. La marcha exigirá que el gobierno “rescate al pueblo, no a los bancos” en el aniversario del asesinato de Martin Luther King Jr. El pueblo verdaderamente necesita el cuidado de salud más que los bancos necesitan otro regalo del gobierno. □